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BRIEFER ARTICLES

GEORGE FRANCIS ATKINSON

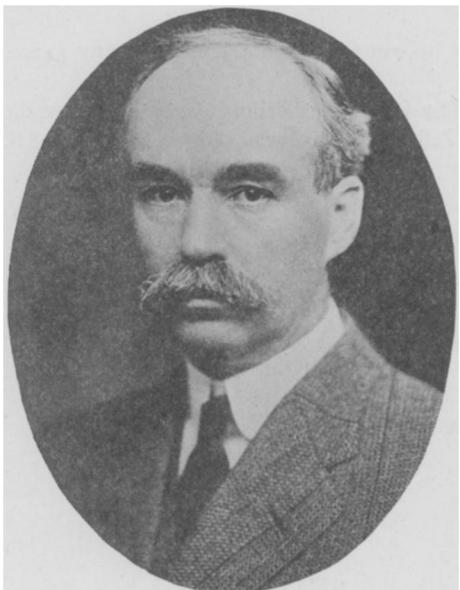
(WITH PORTRAIT)

In the death of GEORGE FRANCIS ATKINSON on November 14, 1918, America lost one of her great botanists. Born in the little village of Raisinville, Monroe County, Michigan, on January 26, 1854, he received his preliminary collegiate training in Olivet College in that state. From there he went to Cornell University, where he took the degree of Ph.B. in 1885. Immediately upon graduation he became assistant professor of general zoölogy at the University of North Carolina.

The following year he was made associate professor, remaining there until 1888, when he was called to a full professorship in botany and zoölogy in the University of South Carolina. In 1889 he was appointed professor of biology and botany in the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, where he remained until 1892. In 1892 he was called to Cornell University as assistant professor of botany, became associate professor in 1893, and upon the death of Professor Prentiss in 1896 was made full

professor and head of the department. He was also for many years the botanist of the Cornell Agricultural Experiment Station. He continued head of the Department of Botany in the Arts College in Cornell University until his death.

Upon the request of an organization of his former students, the Board of Trustees of the University in 1917 relieved him of all teaching



and administrative burdens in order that he might devote his entire time and energies to the completion of his monographic studies on the fleshy fungi of North America.

In the vigorous and enthusiastic pursuit of this enterprise he made an extensive collecting trip through the Atlantic seaboard states from Florida to the District of Columbia in the spring and summer of 1918. Returning to Ithaca in September he left after an all too short rest for the Pacific Coast, there to pursue his studies of the fleshy fungus flora of that region. On this trip he was without any assistant and most of the time alone. A former student, Dr. ADELINE AMES, spent a few days collecting with him in the region about Tacoma, Washington, shortly before his death.

Urged by the wonderful variety and abundance of the forms he found and an indomitable enthusiasm for his work, he apparently labored beyond his strength and exposed himself to unusual hardships. He took a heavy cold from exposure on a trip into the mountains near Tacoma, Washington, which rapidly developed into influenza followed by pneumonia. He died in the City Hospital at Tacoma far from friends and kindred, another martyr to the cause of botanical science.

Professor FRYE of the University of Washington upon news of his death went immediately to Tacoma to learn the details and to rescue his notes and collections. Dr. AMES also went again to Tacoma shortly thereafter. Thanks to their generous and painstaking efforts we have a full account of Professor ATKINSON's last days. This record gives us a wonderful insight into the man's devotion to his work and a fuller appreciation of his greatness.

Interested primarily in entomology in the early days of his career, he soon turned to the botanical field, and especially mycology, in which perhaps he has made his most notable investigations. He was without doubt the greatest American student of the fleshy Basidiomycetes. His numerous contributions in this field and a remarkably large and exceptionally excellent collection of photographs, together with specimens and notes on these forms not only American but European attest his preeminence in this field. He was, however, a botanist of wide interests, and his investigations and writings touch nearly every branch of this broad field. A true philosopher, he gave to his contributions that philosophical character and flavor which is the mark of scientific genius.

He was the author of many textbooks, notable among which are several elementary and college textbooks of general botany, "The biology of ferns," and "Mushrooms, edible, poisonous, etc." He made many

contributions to the botanical journals, not only of America but also of England, France, and Germany.

His travels in Europe, his extensive correspondence, and the students that came from the ends of the earth to study in his laboratories have made his name familiar in the botanical institutions of every land. As a delegate to the International Botanical Congresses of 1905 and 1910 held in Vienna and Brussels respectively, he made for conservatism in botanical nomenclature. A charter member of the Botanical Society of America and at one time president, he has been for a generation one of the leaders of American botanical thought and activity. He was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a member of the American Philosophical Society, and in 1918 was elected to the National Academy of Science. He was for years an associate editor of the *BOTANICAL GAZETTE*. He was also a member of the honorary societies of Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi.

To those of us who knew him intimately as teacher and friend, our days with him in field and laboratory will ever remain a happy and a grateful memory. He was a master of the highest scientific ideals, unsparing in his criticisms, just and fair in his judgments, generous with help and suggestions, a good friend and a genial companion.—H. H. WHETZEL, *Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.*